Numb. 47.

THE OBSERVATOR.

On the Miſchiefs of Prieſt-craft *in* Popiſh *Countries, particularly in* Spain *at this Juncture. On* Portocarrero's *Sermon. Inſtances of the Weakneſs of the Powers of* France, *in reſpect to their Land-Armies and their Natural Strength. The Advantage of the Confederates in being Maſters of the Sea, and particularly of the* Engliſh *Nation.*

From Wednesday September the 30th, to Saturday October the 3d, 1702.

Country-m. MAſter *Obſervator*, Ever ſince I ſaw you, my Head has been running on the *Miſchiefs of Prieſt-craft*, I find that does the *Confederacy* more miſchief than the Powers of *France* and *Rome:* Who could imagine that the common People in Popiſh Countries ſhould be ſuch Oafs as to be led by the Prieſt-hood to their own Deſtruction, in ſuch a blind Nonſenſical manner as they are?

Obſ. What's the matter now, honeſt *Country-man?* How have the Popiſh Prieſts Diſoblig'd you? What miſchiefs have they done to the Confederacy?

Country-m. I am informed by the News at *London*, that as ſoon as the Duke of *Ormond* Landed at *Cadiz*, the Cardinal *Portocarrero* preached a Sermon at *Madrid*, wherein he ſtirred up the People to Reſiſt, or at leaſt not to Aſſiſt the Duke of *Ormond*, becauſe he was Landed there with an Army of *Hereticks*; and that the Emperour was an *Apoſtate* from the Church of *Rome*, in joining with theſe *Hereticks*, to make good his Title to the Crown of *Spain*; and that he has ordered the Inferiour Prieſts to Preach up this Doctrine throughout the whole Kingdom.

Obſ. And can you blame *Portocarrero* for this? You know he was the Perſon that *Contrived* the Will of the late King of *Spain*, which if it be not made good, he can by no means ſave his Bacon; *He* and *Anjou* muſt fall together; *France*, 'tis true, is a Receptacle for *Bankrupt Princes*, but if it be alſo bound to maintain all the *Fugitive Prieſts* in *Europe*, its *Penſioners* in 12 Months time will be a greater Charge then its Armies. This Trick is natural enough in *Portocarrero*, whoſe Welfare or Ruin depends upon the Fate of *Spain*.

Country-m. I am not in leaſt concerned for that Cardinal; let him go before the Wind to *Deſtruction* with all my Soul; but I am concern'd for the Natives, that thoſe Blockheads that have now an Opportunity of Reſcuing themſelves from the *French Slavery*, ſhould omit any occaſion of making themſelves *Freemen:* What we call *Bigottry*, is the moſt unreaſonable thing in the World: Its monſtrous that Men ſhould lay aſide the *Light of Nature*, which continually Enlightens the Path to *Happineſs* and *Freedom*, and ſhould make uſe of the *Prieſts Spectacles*, which diſcover Objects under falſe Repreſentations, and make things appear what really they are not. Our Tantivy *High Flying Prieſts* in former Reigns preach'd Damnation to ſuch as ſhould Reſiſt the Prince in taking away our *Civil Rights*, but we had more wit than to believe them; and when the Prince of *Orange* came over to help us in the Recovery of our *Rights*, we did not cry out *That he brought a Company of Dutchmen to effect it*, but we readily join'd them in ſo good a Cauſe as that of *Liberty*; and had we not done ſo, we had been Slaves at this preſent time. If the *Spaniſh* Slaves will not be ſaved by *Hereticks* as they call them, in the Devils Name let 'em be Damn'd by their own Prieſts, and continue Slaves to the end of the Chapter: They are ſo Iniured to Chains and Fetters, that perhaps they halt without them: But I hope the Confederate *Hereticks* in *Spain* will be able to make good their Ground without the Aſſiſtance and notwithſtanding the Reſiſtance of thoſe *Bigotted Idolators*.

Obſ. The Popiſh Clergy in all Countries have a vaſt Influence over the Populace. Thoſe People who believe a piece of *Wood* to be a *God*, may eaſily believe a *Wooden Prieſt* to be more than a Man; and as they pay Divine Adoration to the one, ſo they may believe the other by an *Implicite Faith*; for when Men are denyed the uſe of their own Reaſon, if they believe at all, they muſt believe according to the Direction of Others: The *Roman* Religion is a meet *Machine*, a *State-Juggle* contrived on purpoſe to Enſlave Ignorant Devotees. It's a *Gin* to catch *Religious-Woodcocks* by their Underſtandings, who are like a Maſs of Matter form'd into a Political World, of which the Pope is the *Primum Mobile*. In ſhort 'tis a Hodge-podge of Nonſenſe, *Founded* on *Villany* and *ſupported* by *Murder*, *Theft* and *Rapine*; and as Diametrically oppoſite to the Doctrines of Jeſus Chriſt, as a *High-Flyer* is a *True Engliſhman*. Whatever Eſſays are made towards the Reſtoring of *Liberty* & *Property*, the *Popiſh* Clergy immediately cry out *They are deſigned againſt the Church*. All the Arguments of *National Advantage*, of *Civil Liberty* and *Property*, ſignify nothing when they ſtand in Competition with the Intereſt of Holy Church. A true Papiſt muſt *Murder* his *Neighbour*, nay his *Father*, *Child*, or *Wife*, if the Prieſt recommends the Action as an Advantage to the See of *Rome*. I remember my Tutor told me of a Student in his Colledge, that never had Studied to argue on any Queſtion but on this, *An Logica ſit Ars*. In which he became ſo Dextrous, that no Man was able to diſpute him. 'Tis true he would Diſpute on any other Queſtions, in *Logic*, *Phyſick*, *Ethicks* or *Metaphyſicks*, but ſtill he ſo work'd the Queſtion about, that he brought it to *An Logica ſit Ars*, at laſt; and then his Opponent *Blancatus fuit quaſi Litium*. In like manner do the *Popiſh Clergy* argue, they bring all the Conſiderations of *Equity* and *Juſtice*, and *Right* and *Wrong*, of *National Advantage* and *Intereſt*, to the confounding Arguments of *Church Policy*; and then the Laicks have not one word more to ſay, that ſingle word *Church*, is as diſmal in their Ears, as the ſound of

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the laſt Trumpet will be to the Wicked at the Day of Judgment. Let the Prieſts but ſay *That the Church is in Danger*, the *Bigots* will make oppoſition, *Right* or *Wrong*; they'll beat their own Eyes out if occaſion be for the ſake of they know not what.

Country-m. Then the Popiſh Prieſts are the *Huntſmen* and their People are the *Hounds*, they muſt run at any Game, it ſeems, if the Prieſts ſet them on. But thoſe People are not like my *Greyhound*, he knows what is Game and what is not, he will not leave the *Hare* to worry the *Sheep*, but theſe *Spaniards* cannot diſtinguiſh betwixt ſuch as are their *Enemies* and ſuch as are their *Friends*; poor Wretches!

Obſ. I wiſh every Man in *England* had ſeen the Miſery and Vaſſallage of Popiſh Countries; it is ſuch as cannot be expreſs'd, tho nothing but view can give you a perfect Idea of their Miſery. The extream *Want* and *Poverty* which they labour under, is not ſo clear an Inſtance of their wretched Eſtate, as is that *Egyptian* blindneſs in which they are kept by their Prieſts; this perfectly Unmans them, and Humane Nature is debaſed in every Vaſſal; thanks be to the Almighty it is not thus with *Engliſhmen*: We have a Liberty of Judging concerning the true Intereſt of our Country, there is no Screen betwixt our *Reaſon* and our *Religion*; we have a perfect knowledge of our *Liberties*, and 'tis our high Priviledge that we can *Speak*, *Write* and *Fight* in Defence of 'em.

Country-m. Sir, I remember not long ago you were ſaying that the Defection of the Elector of *Bavaria* was procured by the *French* chiefly, to Divert the Confederates from the Siege of *Landau*, I have found you a true Prophet in many things ſince we came acquainted, and in this alſo. Here's a Letter in the *Poſt-man*, which confirms your opinion, which Letter was ſent from Monſieur *Ricour*, the *French* Kings Envoy to the Elector of *Bavaria* to Monſieur *Chamilart* Secretary of State, and Comptrouler General of the *Finances* of the *French* King. It gives us a plain Demonſtration that the *French* Court are at their Wits End to find out *Ways* and *Means* to baffle the Confederates.

Obſ. Without doubt the *French* Affairs were never more Embarraſs'd than at this Juncture, their waiting for the Plate-Fleet has put them beſides the Conſiderations of raiſing money by other means for the ſupport of their Armies, whoſe Condition in *Flanders* is a ſufficient Proof of the *Weakneſs* of the *Gallick* Forces, they have not been able to undertake one conſiderable Enterprize, nor to *Guard* themſelves againſt one Attack of the Confederates during the whole Campaign. What ſhall we ſay of the *French* boaſts, when the invincible *Lewis* has been forc'd to Diſgorge himſelf of *Landau*, a place of ſo great Importance in this War, and which was Fortify'd to a Degree of Strength equal to that of *Namure*, which coſt us an Army of *Engliſhmen* in the late War before we could make our ſelves Maſters of it? But *Landau* was Ingloriouſly Surrendered, before we had loſt a handful of Men in its Attack, and the very Powder and Ball ſpent in the Rejoycings for the Taking of that Place, was the occaſion of the Surrender of *Venlo*. A Fortunate Campaign indeed, has it been to the Confederate Armies: Succeſs has March'd before 'em like the Morning Star, and Immortal Fame has brought up the Rear, to the laſting Honour of thoſe worthy Chieftains.

The Deſertion of the *French* Soldiers is another great Inſtance of the *Weakneſs* of the Power of *France*. They ſeek all opportunies of coming over to the Confederates, and when they come over, they look like Walking Skeletons, or like the Maulkins we ſet up to fright the Crows from a Peaſe-field; for they have little more of the Martial Livery on them, than the Buff, which Nature gave them for their firſt Clothing, and they are become ſo unacquainted with Money that they cannot tell a *Soulx* from a *Denneir*. To Fight for *Bread* and *Garlick*, as formerly, is but indifferent Service; but to Starve under a Muſquet and a Collar of Bandaleers, is the Devil. Deſertion is a catching Diſtemper, with which if the *French* Army be once Infected, like the Leproſie, it will over-ſpread every part of it.

Yet a greater Inſtance than theſe have we of the *Weakneſs* of the Powers of *France*; if we conſider the true State of their Naval Strength: The *French* before the War had not recovered the Blow Admiral *Ruſſel* gave them at *La Hogue*, they had not then repaired the loſs of Fourteen of their 3 Deckſhips; and ſince this War, by the Union of the Crowns of *France* and *Spain*, they have been forc'd totally to Neglect the Service of the Channel, and to ſend their Ships Abroad to the *Adriatick* and the *Spaniſh Weſt-Indies*, to unhealthly Climates, where they have loſt ſuch vaſt Numbers of Sailors that it will be impoſſible for them to Man their Fleets for the future. I cannot help it, if I go contrary to the common Opinion of Mankind in believing that the Plate Fleet is ſtill at *Carthagena*, in the ſame Condition it was a Twelve Months ago; for no Man that underſtands the Nature of that Country, can believe the *French* have Men enough living there to bring that Fleet to *Europe*, and perhaps the Rumour of the Plate-Fleets being got into *Placentia* in *Newfoundland*, was no more than this; that ſome of the *French* Frigots came thither to Impreſs Seamen for the Service of the Fleet in the *Havana*, it being the neareſt place for that purpoſe. If ſo, the Trade of *France* is wounded in its Vitals; for the *Newfoundland* Trade is the very Heart of the *French* Commerce, and now they are not able to bring their Fiſh to Market.

From the preſent Circumſtances of the *French*, we may conclude the vaſt advantage of a ſtrong Fleet to the *Engliſh* Nation. What would the Forces at *Cadiz* ſignify, if they were not Back'd by a Potent Navy? Thoſe are certainly the Arbiters of *Europe*, who are Maſters of the Sea, which is now the abſolute Dominion of the Confederates; and being ſo, the Trade of the Merchants is as well ſecured as in times of Peace. The River of *Thames* at this day affords us a Profitable Inſtance hereof; in which River we have now nine *Eaſt-India*-Men, 150 *Virginia* Ships in that and other parts, 35 Ships from *Ruſſia*, beſides abundance of other Ships entered inwards at the Cuſtom-Houſe in leſs than a Fortnights time; and the *Virginia* Fleet of it ſelf will bring more Money into Her Majeſties Exchequer, than the whole Trade of *France* will bring into the *French* Kings in a Year.

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